

Stockton Poll: NJ Residents Say College Is Worth It But Have Ideas for Improvement

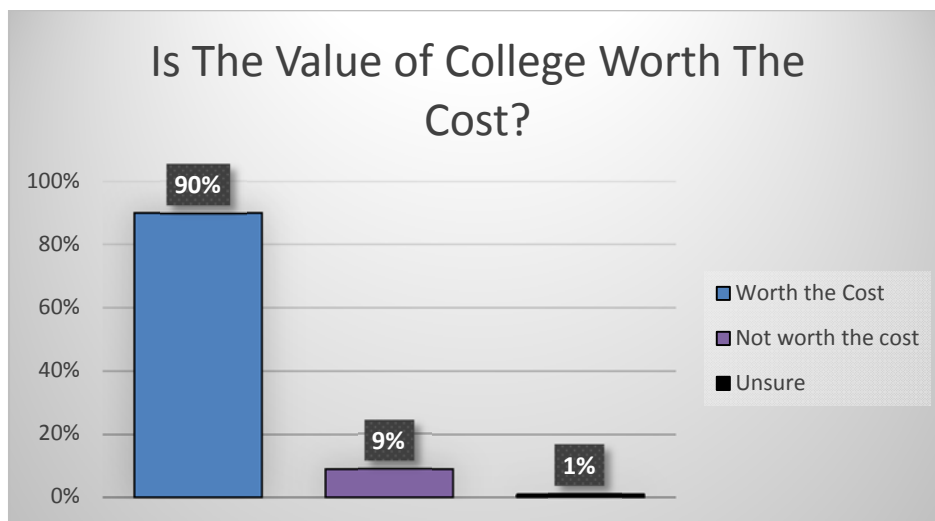
Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance (HESIG) project

For Immediate Release

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Galloway, NJ - An overwhelming number - 90 percent - of the New Jersey adults who have attended college say that higher education is worth the cost. Residents link college opportunity directly to the ability to find jobs, develop careers, and to improve the quality of life for families.



Over 800 New Jersey adults were polled for the Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance (HESIG) project (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter/hesig) by the Stockton Polling Institute.

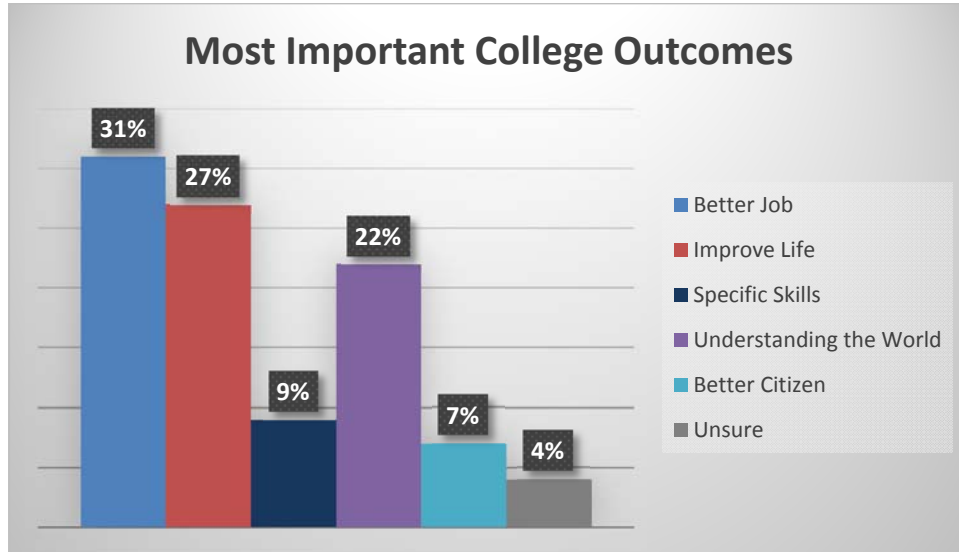
“New Jerseyans see the state’s colleges and universities as having high quality, as well as high

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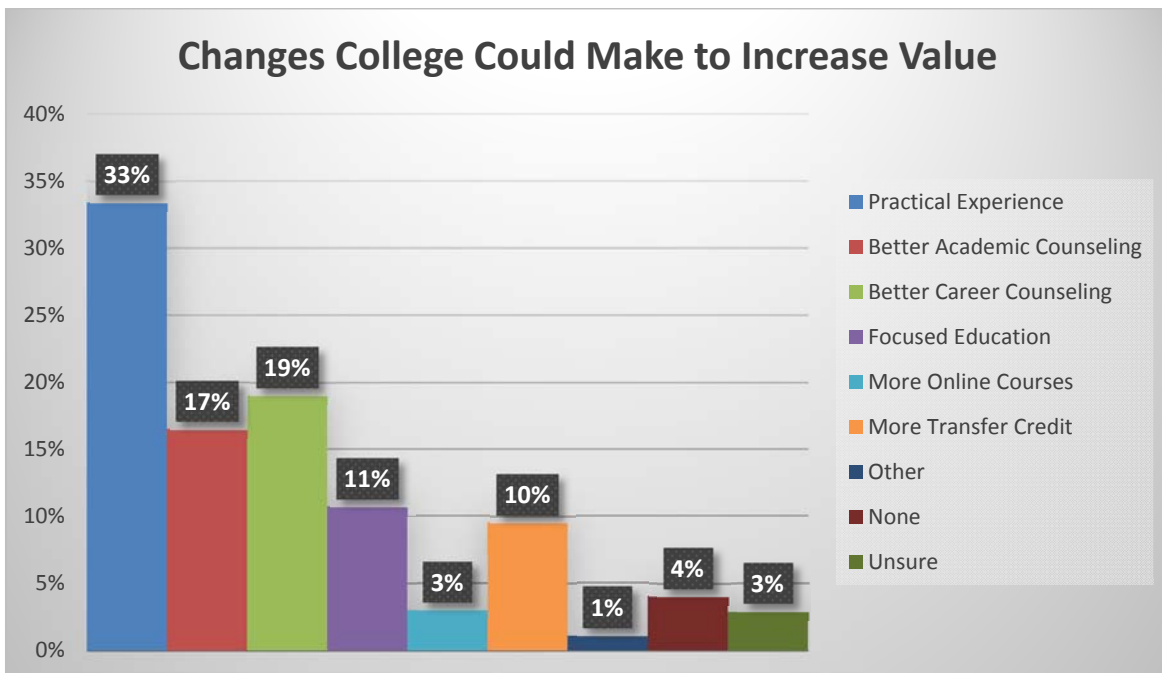
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value, even with their consistent concerns about college affordability,” stated Darryl G. Greer, Ph.D., Senior Fellow for Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance.

“However, they have specific ideas about what students and colleges need to do to increase value - principally, to partner with business to create more practical in-college experiences, such as internships,” said Dr. Greer.



“This study gives our citizens, and policy makers, significant positive feedback and hope for the future of college opportunity in the Garden State. It confirms prior Stockton research, and recent national studies by Pew, Gallup and others, that citizens view college opportunity as key to individual prosperity. And it gives us a deeper understanding of what needs to be done to make college more valuable in serving individual and state needs,” explained Dr. Greer.



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Some poll highlights include:

- Quality: 77 percent say NJ colleges are good or excellent; 86 percent say four-year colleges are seen as having the highest quality, contrasted to two-year and online colleges.
- Value: 90 percent of those who attended college find that the value of college is worth the cost. Top college outcomes include: getting a better job (31 percent) and improving the quality of life (27 percent).
- Best way to increase college value: respondents' top answers were for colleges to provide more practical experiences, such as internships (33 percent); and for students to find more work and internship experiences (29 percent).
- Top responses for helping to reduce time to finish a degree include: easier credit transfer (34 percent), and more information about jobs and careers (25 percent).
- Need for change: 87 percent say that major or some change is needed in the way colleges do business, to increase value.
- Who should be responsible for changes: 50 percent of respondents say that colleges working with businesses should take responsibility for change in practices to increase value, favored over colleges in partnership with government (35 percent), or colleges alone (12 percent).
- Most important skills: problem solving (82 percent); writing (81 percent); and communicating (80 percent); are viewed as among the most important skills and abilities gained from college.
- Reason for choosing a college: location (25 percent); program offering (24 percent); price (20 percent); and quality (14 percent); were cited in order of influence on the decision to choose a particular college.

“This study confirms advice from two executive roundtables held earlier this year at Stockton and New Jersey City University, and tells us that we are on the right track in New Jersey, in listening to the public and serving educational and state needs,” said Stockton College President Herman Saatkamp. “Citizens and business leaders are very clear on skills needed to compete and prosper in the 21st century. Creating more academic partnerships with schools and community colleges, and more practice-oriented experiences with business, will be the key to success on greater college access, affordability and completion.”

The poll reinforced the importance of higher order skills and abilities, as valued outcomes of a college experience. Stockton faculty has gained national attention in defining 10 “College Essential Learning Outcomes (ELO’s),” including communications, critical thinking, ethical and quantitative reasoning, global awareness, and teamwork/collaboration.

Dr. Greer indicated that next steps will include making specific policy recommendations to colleges, Trenton policy makers, and business leaders about achieving the goals of greater college access, affordability, and completion, especially for New Jersey’s emerging population; as well as increasing the state’s participation in the national discussion of these issues.

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The Educational Testing Service (ETS) Center for Advocacy and Philanthropy (www.ets.org) provided grant support of the roundtables and the poll, as part of “Finding Solutions, Building Public Trust in An Era of Change.”

Methodology

Interviews were conducted at the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy’s Stockton Polling Institute (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) by live interviewers calling from the Stockton College campus. The poll was conducted with 801 adults in New Jersey. Calls were fielded from May 14-23, 2014 and from May 27-June 1, 2014. Interviewers called both land lines and cell phones. All prospective respondent households in the source telephone list have the same chance of joining the sample because of random selection. The survey has a margin of error (MOE) of +/- 3.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. MOE is higher for subsets. Data are weighted based on United States Census Bureau demographics for the New Jersey population.

About Higher Education and Strategic Information Governance (HESIG)

The mission of HESIG (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter/hesig) is to serve as an agent for constructive higher education policy change, aligned with a public agenda to serve the public good. Guiding principles include: enhancing college access, affordability, college completion, accountability and public trust. HESIG collects, analyzes, evaluates and disseminates objective, timely empirical information and governance best practices.

About the Hughes Center

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy (www.stockton.edu/hughescenter) at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey, and is also the home of the Stockton Polling Institute. The Center is named for William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton College. The Hughes Center can be followed on Twitter @hughescenter and found on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/Hughes.Center.Stockton.College>. The Hughes Center blog can be found at blogs.stockton.edu/policyhues.



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